



THE WRANGELL WIRE

A NEWSLETTER BY THE STAFF OF
WRANGELL ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE COPPER RIVER BASIN

VOLUME: ONE ISSUE: ONE SPRING / SUMMER 1999

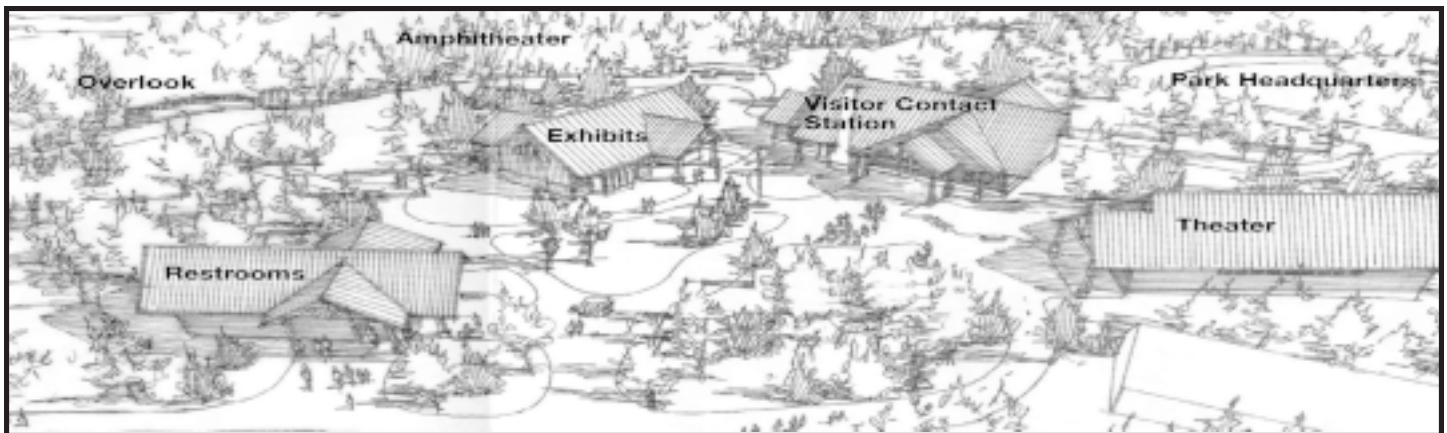


Welcome to the first edition of the Wrangell Wire, an attempt by the staff of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve to keep the lines of communication open to and from the community. While the National Park Service puts out lots of brochures, maps, and newspapers for visitors, this publication is for you, as members of the community in and around the Copper Valley.

As we all know, the Wrangells have been discovered and are being promoted as a new destination, and this has implications for all of us, both good and bad. The good side is more economic diversity, more jobs, and more business opportunities as well as the chance to share this incredible place with others. The bad is the potential to overwhelm our services, infrastructure and lifestyles. Community health is not only determined by economic viability but also the quality of the lifestyle, the environment, and the local culture. We as the staff of the park, and as members of the community, are committed to close coordination with the communities around the valley.

We have used the radio stations, the Copper River Journal, the Chamber and lots of meetings to let folks know what is happening. This is one more attempt to give you an overview of things that are happening at the park.

Jonathan B. Jarvis, Superintendent



Update on the Visitor Center Construction

This year, the NPS received funding for the construction of the Visitor Center and Headquarters on our site near Copper Center. AEC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Ahtna, Inc., will be the prime contractor for the construction, expected to start in June or July of this summer. We expect the construction to take two seasons, so realistically we will probably not be fully operational until the summer of 2001.

The full project includes nine structures, a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile trail, overlooks, entrance road and parking, exhibits, and a 20-minute film. The structures include offices for staff, restrooms for bus loads of visitors, a 90-seat theater, an exhibit building, and a visitor center. The visitor center will also serve for meeting space and environmental education in the winter. The theater will be used for showing the new film but also for other presentations, such as slide

programs, story telling, or Native dance performances. There will also be a small outdoor amphitheater for when the bugs aren't bad! The trail will offer a nice hike with views of the river and the mountains plus the historic "Valdez to Eagle" historic trail. There will be picnic sites and level trails/walks for the elderly or mobility impaired. Wrangell-St. Elias Facility Manager, Will Tipton, will be working closely with the contractor over the next two years.

Ahtna Museum to be Part of Visitor Center Complex

Wrangell - St. Elias and the Ahtna Heritage Corporation have entered into a cooperative agreement to develop a Ahtna Heritage Museum on the new Visitor Center grounds. The intention of the museum is to provide an opportunity for visitors to the area to understand the Ahtna people from their own perspective through a variety of interpretive materials, art-forms and hand-crafted sale items.

Under the agreement, the NPS will provide professional exhibit's planning assistance and consultation in support of the Ahtna people's objectives, to provide the Ahtna Heritage Foundation with technical support as it applies for grants for the curation and preservation of Ahtna artifacts, to work closely with the foundation in identifying the museum's most pressing needs, and to assist in developing a program to train Ahtna shareholders or their descendants in curation, preservation and the design of exhibits. Wrangell-St. Elias Chief of Interpretation, Ed Roberts, will be closely coordinating the Ahtna exhibits with the exhibits in the new Visitor Center.

It is important to note that Ahtna, Inc. is constructing the museum with their own funding, although the NPS, through federal funding obtained by Senator Ted Stevens, is providing some assistance with planning. The Ahtna museum will be fully operated by Ahtna Heritage Corporation and will not in any way be controlled by the NPS.

Kennecott Lead Paint Stabilization Project

This summer (around the first week in June) a five-person crew will start work on a number of projects at the Kennecott Mill site to stabilize and repair many of those structures visited by thousands of people each year. Since the safety for visitors and employees is of paramount concern, the initial projects will concentrate on such tasks as developing safe egress and ingress to buildings and

trails around the mine site; the inspection of timbers and framing that may have been damaged or failed over the years due to abnormal snow loads, excessive stormwater, mold and mildew; the construction of hand rails on stairways and walkways; repairs to flooring and wooden surfaces; roof repair; and the abatement of lead based paint on all interior/ exterior wooden surfaces.

Ron Dorsey, the Kennecott Project Manager, says that approximately, 144,000 square feet of wooden surfaces need to be checked for repairs, stabilized and painted. These repairs will include and certainly not be limited to the following: the scraping and wet sanding of old paint surfaces that have failed; the prime painting of all surfaces with one coat of alkyd oil encapsulant primer paint; and finish painting all surfaces with two coats of 100% acrylic latex paint.

Kennecott GMP Amendment & Cultural Landscape Report

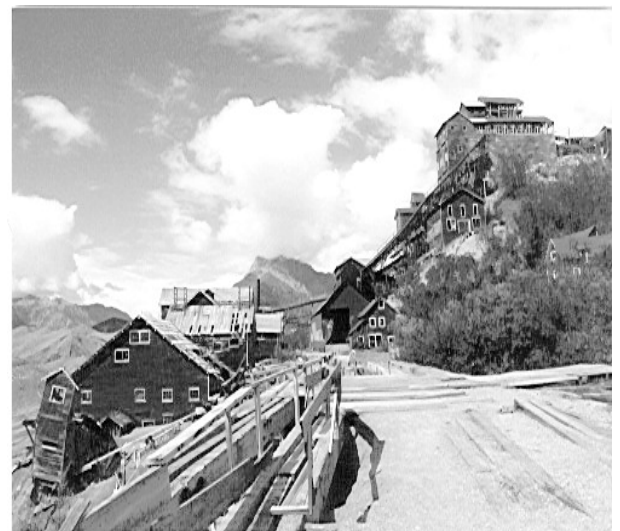
When the NPS acquired the Kennecott National Historic Landmark in June of 1998 an operations planning effort was initiated. The operations plan will outline how the site will be managed for the next five years. The various alternatives for operating the site were prepared by the NPS with substantial assistance from community members and local non-profit groups. The preferred alternative calls for the company store to be rehabilitated for a visitor contact station. The community building will be restored for public and community functions. Other important structures such as the mill building, machine shop and power house will be stabilized so that further deterioration will not occur. These buildings may then be available for public access for interpretive exhibits. The NPS will be working with interested parties to develop interpretive

programs for the public.

Vicki Snitzler, Park Planner, says this draft plan and environmental assessment will be available for review and comment by late spring of this year. The final plan will be an amendment to the park's General Management Plan and will include a Cultural Landscape Report. This report will help in the management of the site by providing documentation of the existing conditions of the buildings and other resources and it will recommend appropriate treatments for landscape components. For example, the report will recommend which vegetation, meeds to be cleared away from important structures so visitors will be able to see them and be able to understand how the site looked when the mill was operating.

Historic preservation techniques will be used to protect the historic fabric, i.e. timbers, glass, siding, etc., as well as the use of construction techniques to assemble framing components and painting techniques used to duplicate the original finish. These procedures will be accomplished in accordance with Section 106- National Historic Preservation Act, the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Preservation Projects and NPS-28 Guidelines for Cultural Resource Management.

These projects will be completed over a period of years and will require that volunteers, local civic and private organizations all work together for the benefit of future generations of park visitors.



Public Use Cabin Program

Inside the boundaries of the National Park and Preserve are numerous cabins and buildings that lay testament to activities and came before the congressional designation of Wrangell St. Elias. Many of these old buildings are associated with the commercial pursuits of the day such as mining, guiding, trapping, and fox farming. Some supported subsistence activities, and some were shelters along mail delivery routes. Each and every one of these buildings tell a story about the land, and the people that lived and worked in what is now designated nationally significant park lands.

We value these buildings today for their historic and cultural significance, and for what they can provide the public today. Some, like the Solo Mountain cabin that lies between the White River and Chisana, are shelters along a route taken by trekkers in the summers, snow-machiners in the winter and hunters in the fall. Jakes Bar cabin along the Chitina River is a cabin/ airstrip combination that provides a recreational destination but perhaps more importantly a safety shelter for people travelling by air or by river. Other cabin/airstrip combinations are Peavine, and on the Chitistone River, Glacier Creek about 3 miles up from Peavine, Chelle about 16 miles east of Gulkana airport. Some cabins have been restored to historic architectural standards such as those in the Chisana historic district.

Our approach to determining which cabins to undertake for stabilization or restoration takes different forms. Park management is fully aware that once a structure reaches a certain state of disrepair the effort to restore it is not worth its value. You can see the moldering remains of such cabins scattered throughout the park. Cabins such as the Skolai Lake cabin are still standing but almost completely filled in with gravel from an agrading stream channel. While

they still have value as a footnote to past activities, it is not feasible to restore them. The Peavine ruins shown here is typical of buildings in the final state of decline after roof and foundation failure.

When we undertake to restore a cabin we make a commitment to the maintenance of that structure. As in any public improvement project the costs of maintenance represents a long-term financial commitment, and is not taken lightly. The process we use to accept the cabin into our program considers these obligations. The values we try to uphold with cabin restoration are related to safety,



recreation, function, and historic/ cultural qualities. In addition we have to factor in cost and level of effort required by the project. Some cabins are accessible by road or trail (easy), some by fixed wing aircraft (not so easy) and some by helicopter (costly). The cost aspect of restorations are weighed against their value.

The park's ability to do cabin restoration has been evolving over the past 12 years or so. The NPS Alaska regional office has a historic architect that provides direction and quality control. Locally we have been able to employ a seasonal work force that has the skill and experience to do cabin work. It may seem odd, but with historic restoration work one objective is to retain the "old" look that tells the story of the building in its day.

When doing restoration or maintenance it is essential to avoid new material or modern day biases in the process. Ironically, when we are done the building should look old! Appreciating that value is a big part of the 'learning curve' for new workers.

Cabin work is positive for the park, the local work force, and to the park's mission to provide preservation of important historic resources and recreation opportunities for the public. We feel good about our accomplishments and hope you do too. At this time there is no reservation system or permit needed to use public cabins. There is much private land within the park however, and it is sometimes difficult to know what is public or private. Please talk to the park folks at the visitor center to find out what cabins are available for your use. They will have a list of improved cabins and good information about their significance to the park and suggestions on how to best get to them.

By the way, since the cabin program is a relatively new dimension to our management, and we do not have a reservation or monitoring systems in place, we have not promoted them. It's a bit like divulging your favorite fishing hole. We don't want over-burdening pressures to use the cabins create a need for additional regulations. Regulating the use of cabins is an option if conflicting resource pressures require it but at this point we are hoping that it is a long way off.



Archeological Excavation at Kennecott Machine Shop

Anne Worthington, Park Archeologist, will be supervising an above-ground archeological "excavation" at the Kennecott machine shop this summer. The machine shop and the area immediately around it was used as a storage area for parts, tools and other miscellaneous items that had been removed or might have been needed for future work at Kennecott. While most "excavations" occur below ground, this project will apply stratigraphic principles to the above ground accumulation of parts and other items in order to identify not only the types of objects stored there but contribute to an understanding of technological adaptation and change that affected operations. Two archeologists will be hired by the park to complete this work. Final products will include a small publication and an inventory of the objects for management purposes. Visitors will be welcome at the "digs".

Chisana Airstrip

The NPS, AKDOT/PF and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have entered into an agreement to develop a plan for improvements to the airstrip at Chisana. The agencies will be evaluating alternatives for airstrip improvements that include different lengths and widths, the creation of a taxi way, and an airplane tie-down area. These alternatives were developed with community assistance. This summer the contractor that AKDOT/PF has hired to prepare the environmental assessment will be gathering information about the Chisana airstrip. They will be taking soil samples from the runway and will be assessing possible gravel sources. Vegetation clearing heights will be evaluated as well. It is the hope of the agencies that most of the improvements needed can be made within the existing footprint of the current airstrip. But an even more important goal is to ensure aviation safety at the airstrip.

Questions/comments on these projects can be directed to Vicki Snitzler at 907-822-5238 or vicki_snitzler@nps.gov



Resources for the Researcher

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve would like to invite the public to consult its expanding archive of historic photographs. Now containing copies of nearly 1,100 images captured in the Copper Basin between 1898 and 1950, it represents a unique resource to researchers or other interested individuals. Please call Park Historian Geoffrey Bleakley at (907) 822-7232 for further information.



Helicopter Use in Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P

The park has a helicopter use policy which limits the use of the park helicopter during sheep hunting season, restricts flight around residences and sensitive areas, and establishes altitude minimums. Any deviation from this policy except for emergencies will require written approval from the Superintendent. The helicopter is used strictly for park operations that cannot be accessed efficiently in another manner.

Each year Wrangell-St. Elias enters into a 90-day contract with a helicopter company to provide fire suppression/monitoring support to Wrangell-St. Elias, Yukon-Charley National Preserve, and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. This summer the helicopter is scheduled to be in Wrangell May 15th through June 4th and June 27th through July 15th. We will be working out of Chisana, May Creek, and Gulkana. To most efficiently use the helicopter, when it is not monitoring fires, it is used for other park priorities including research of various glaciers, filming for the new visitor center, forest health research, and cleanup of a number of sites throughout the park.

If you have questions concerning the helicopter please call Marsha Lutz at 822-5236.



Spruce Bark Beetle Update

During the past ten years, the Copper River Basin has experienced a dramatic outbreak of spruce bark beetles (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*). This native insect generally attacks larger diameter, slow growing white spruce (*Picea glauca*). Although usually at low population levels, periodic epidemics such as the recent episode are responsible for dramatic die-offs of trees. Approximately 650,000 acres of forest have been affected by spruce bark beetle in the Copper Basin, 250,000 acres within Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P administrative boundaries.

Jennifer Allen, Park Botanist, and cooperators began a study in 1997 to determine the extent and effect of the spruce bark beetle infestation and what vegetation and wildlife changes may occur. Our approach consists of a forest inventory, development of a vegetation and infestation map, and landscape analysis in a GIS environment. During 1997 and 1998, 136 forest inventory plots were measured with assistance from members of the community. The 670,000-acre study area (East of the Copper River and north of the Chitina River from Dadina River southeast to McCarthy) has been mapped for vegetation types and infestation levels. Data, results and maps developed from this study will be available for land managers and the public in the Fall of 1999. Summer plans include: installing long term monitoring plots on park lands to allow verification of our vegetation change models and assess future trends. We are looking for volunteers for future monitoring! Staff will present the project to the community and land managers in September.

Fire Management in the Park

Alaska has recently adopted the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan. The goal of this planning effort was to provide an opportunity through cooperative planning for land manager/owner(s) to accomplish individual fire-related land-use objectives in the most cost-effective manner. Land managers/owners are defined as state and federal land managing agencies, regional and village Native corporations, and Native allotment owners represented by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or local tribal organizations.

For over 30 years, occurrence of wildland fire was treated as an emergency situation wherein aggressive and complete suppression was the only option available. It was demonstrated that the costs associated with suppressing all wildland fires had reached the point of diminishing returns; that damage created by the suppression action often was more harmful than the fire itself; and research documented the need for ecologically based fire management policies.

Fire is now recognized as a critical feature of the natural history of many ecosystems. The evolutionary development of plants and animals has occurred in natural systems where fire was a dominant feature of the environment. Humans occupying an area were also subjected to the natural fire regime, and fire occurrence increased due to human activity. In Alaska, the natural fire regime is characterized by a return interval of 50 to 200 years, depending on the vegetation type, topography and location.

The National Park Service is a signatory to the Wildland Fire Management Plan. Wrangell - St. Elias NP/P falls within the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry (DOF) Wildland Fire Protection Area. This means that DOF has protection responsibilities for the National Park Service land, the private inholdings within the park, and native allotments.

Wrangell - St. Elias has a Fire

Management Officer, Marsha Lutz, who is responsible to work with the state to insure that the appropriate suppression responses are taken. Marsha also works for Yukon-Charley National Preserve and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

When not working on active fires, the three-person fire staff at Wrangell works on a variety of projects. A few that will be started this summer include fuel reduction around structures to reduce the fire danger, and documenting structures within the park.

If you have any questions concerning the Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan or fire suppression within the park please call Marsha at 822-5236.

Dealing with Abandoned Explosives: Avoiding Unwanted Out of Body Experiences

Mining is important in the history of the Wrangell-St. Elias area. It has produced Kennecott and hundreds of lesser, though still very interesting, sites throughout the area. Mining artifacts and features are scattered across the landscape. Unfortunately, some of these reminders of the past are deadly and present a real hazard to all who live, work or visit the area. Chief among these hazards is abandoned explosives.

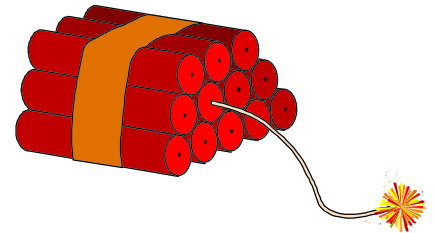
The National Park Service has an obligation to all who use the park to eliminate these hazards in a timely and safe manner as soon as possible after discovery. Everyone who enjoys the park should want to know how to protect themselves and those who come afterwards from the very real risk to life and limb associated with old explosives.

Because of this need, the Park Service will offer a free eight-hour orientation to abandoned explosives class in the McCarthy-Kennecott area this spring. The class will be taught by Mike Shields, a Master Blaster with over 30 years of experience. Mike emphasizes explosives recognition and the hazards, often extreme, which these products present. He makes

extensive use of dummy products and mock-ups, slides, and classroom exercises stressing the risk to the discoverer. The object is to teach you what to do and what not do to protect yourself and others when you encounter abandoned explosives.

This class is directed to all who might reasonably be expected to stumble on old explosives. Do you hike on Bonanza Ridge? Do you hunt in the Preserve? Do you enjoy poking around old mine sites or construction areas? Do you run a business guiding people into the Park? Do you want to know how to protect yourself, your family and friends, and your clients? If so, this class is for you.

The class will be offered sometime in early June to reach as wide an audience as possible. Exactly when and where is not yet determined. If you are interested or want more information, contact Danny Rosenkrans at 907-822-7228 or Logan Hovis at 907-257-2445.



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Greetings from the Nabesna District . . .

The activities during the '99 field season in the Nabesna District will include work on trails, facilities, cabins, and backcountry clean-up.

Marcia Lutz, the Park's Fire Management Officer, will be working with Nabesna District personnel on the Park's cabin data base. She and other Park staff will be checking and recording GPS locations of cabins as well as photographing and recording each cabin's condition. They will also be evaluating cabin locations for potential fire hazards. Primarily, this will involve making a determination as to which cabins might need to have the surrounding brush cleared to create a defendable space. The clean up of other remote sites in the District will continue, as well.

The Nabesna District will be hosting a Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA) "Serve Alaska Youth Corps" crew for part of the summer. This group will be working on trail stabilization on the Reeve Field Trail and others as their time allows. The crew will consist of a leader and six to nine young adults between the ages of 16 and 25. The Serve Alaska Youth Corps, based in Juneau, is designed to provide youth with the skills, education and attitude needed for work and productive lives. This group is funded by a federal grant from the National Service Program better known as AmeriCorps. For more information on Serve Alaska Youth Corps, SAGA can be reached at P.O. Box 33037, Juneau, AK 99803. Their phone number is (907) 789-3118.

Last summer the Park Service installed vaulted outhouses and bear proof trash receptacles in four locations along Nabesna Road. Picnic tables were added to several pullouts and a new pullout was constructed at Mile 18. This summer Lee Penwell will be working in the Nabesna District to maintain these facilities as well as the Slana Ranger Station.

Marshall Neeck is the Nabesna District Ranger. He is stationed out at Slana Ranger Station year round. The WRST Park Planner is Vicki Snitzler. Her office is also located

in the Slana Ranger Station although her projects take her all around the Park and Preserve. In addition to Lee Penwell, staff this summer will include Rick Lee, who will be returning to the Nabesna District as the Seasonal Law Enforcement Ranger; Thelma Schrank, the Nabesna Clerk, and Vicki Rood. A Student Conservation Association (SCA) participant will also be stationed in the Nabesna District again this year. If you are interested in SCA, the Slana Ranger Station has more information available about this program. Although the Slana Ranger Station does not begin regular operating hours, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM until May, Vicki Snitzler and Marshall Neeck are presently available. They encourage you to stop by or call with any questions or suggestions regarding WRST, especially relating to the Nabesna District.

People and Bears: A Fact of Life in the Wrangells

Living and working in the Wrangells brings us closer than many of our visitors to the wildlife that make these mountains their home. For many people the possibility of close contact with wild animals is a large part of the attraction to visiting or living here. Bears in particular interest most people because they represent an animal large enough to do us harm and because of their presence they also are an indicator that the Wrangells are still wild. Since there are a lot of both black bears and brown (grizzly) bears in the Wrangells, there are also a lot of opportunities for conflicts between bears and people.

One area of concern is the visitor camping at the end of the road near McCarthy. The short spur road that leads to the foot of the Kennecott Glacier is in a prime bear feeding area. Bears are curious and if bears are attracted to an area they will inevitably investigate the campsites. The key to reducing

problems is to keep the visitor from rewarding the bear with food. People just walking around the area are also likely to bump into a feeding bear, which could cause a problem! The Park staff are in the process of designing a campground and looking for an alternative location that will allow the visitors to camp away from the prime bear feeding area that is used now.

The Park staff trains every spring to learn different strategies to improve the chances of low hazard encounters with bears during the summer field season. Carl Mitchell, the Park wildlife biologist, explains bear behavior and teaches the staff simple, effective ways to minimize encounters with bears. These include working in groups, making noise in the woods, keeping the wind at your back, avoiding areas known to have high bear use (berry patches, salmon streams, animal carcasses), recognizing bear "sign" (tracks, scats, marking trees), storing food properly, and keeping a clean camp. We also talk about what to do if you happen to run into a bear anyway. As part of that

discussion, the rangers train the staff in the safe and effective use of pepper spray and shotguns. (Contrary to popular belief, neither of these tools is "magic"!) Living in the middle of bear habitat has its own challenges, and

we plan to offer a training session or two for interested folks at McCarthy this spring as well. Information on safe behavior and avoiding bear encounters is also available at the Visitor Center in Copper Center.

Another thing we have to do is check on bear baiting stations. Bear baiting is a legal method of luring black bears, but some of the



hunters who choose this method fail to follow the rules on where bear baiting stations may be placed. We have found bear bait stations within a quarter of a mile of the road and others that were within one mile of a residence. This is serious because it attracts bears into areas heavily used by people. The law is written to allow bear baiting without bringing the bears in contact with people or their homes. Some bait stations are not marked as they should be. Visitors that stop in the park headquarters are interested in being safe around bears, and the signs let them know which areas to avoid.

Our goal is to coexist with the wildlife and to avoid creating or contributing to conditions that result in the removal of the bears from the area.

Electronic Field Trip Coming to the Basin

In 1998, students across the nation took part in two Electronic Field Trips to Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. This live broadcast in digital format, with accompanying curriculum and web components, was the first of its kind in a National Park. This year, over half a million middle school students are enrolled in a similar journey to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, via the web and satellite television.

It is the goal of the Electronic Field Trip program to allow students throughout the country to use the parks as living laboratories for natural and earth science — without leaving their classrooms.

"Very few Americans ever get to see the spectacular beauty and hear the fascinating stories preserved in national parks in Alaska," says Wyndeth Davis, NPS Interpretative Specialist. "For most students Outside, the closest they get to a glacier is a moraine where the toe of a glacier stood 10,000 years ago. Here, they can see it all! Through these field trips, students have the unique opportunity to experience the place through the eyes of people who live

and work here...the people who know the area best."

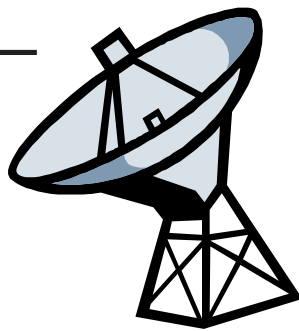
The two broadcasts are tied to national standards for middle school curriculum. Participation and all materials are free to any interested teacher. The rationale, overview and individual classroom activities to accompany the broadcasts are available from:

<http://newmedia.scetv.org/alaska>

In addition, students may email questions to the show's host, Rudy Mancke, to be answered during the live-to-tape broadcast in Kennecott.

The two one-hour broadcasts, entitled "Journeys to Alaska", will air on May 5 and 6, from 9:00-10:00am, Alaska Daylight Time.

Activities, Workshops and Events



This summer will find the staff busy serving visitors in a number of ways. Visitor centers at Slana, Chitina and

McCarthy will be opened to the public daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day. As hours will vary, please call park headquarters for correct time. The days and time of operation for the visitor center at Park Headquarters in Copper Center will be increased for the summer. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, it will be open seven days a week from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

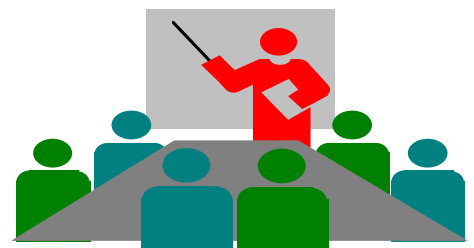
For the fifth consecutive year park staff will work closely with the Wrangell Mountain Center and Prince William Sound Community College (PWSCC) to provide teachers in the Copper Basin with opportunities to improve their outdoors education teaching skills. Two workshops are scheduled this year at McCarthy. The first workshop, June 7-11, explores the relationship between environmental education techniques and classroom

standards. The second workshop, June 11-15, will focus on tools and techniques for field-based natural and earth science education. The park's natural history association has offered a limited number of scholarships to qualified educators in the area.

The successful evening programs offered last summer at Kennecott by members of the community and the McCarthy/Kennecott staff will once again be offered. As a result of last summer's acquisition of the Kennecott property, interpretive presence there will be increased to provide visitor safety at the mill site. There will be minor increases at the park campground near the end of the road as well. It is hoped that this increased activity will help to minimize bear encounters, trespassing by visitors, and protect water sources.

In addition to increased interpretation at McCarthy, there will also be more staff at Chitina. Active outreach activities at the state wayside exhibits along with regular staffing of the ranger station should contribute to better understanding of land ownership along the McCarthy road. Friday evening programs are also planned.

For the third year the staff is planning a Leave No Trace camping program for young people in the Copper Basin. All camping equipment for this program is provided by the park with community organizations supplying transportation and other needed support. There are other activities being planned for the Glennallen area, including evening programs and participation in migratory bird census. This is shaping up to be an exciting summer at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.



Employment with the National Park Service

Wrangell- St. Elias NP/P has 25 Permanent employees. Of this number, 8 are Local Hire appointees, and of those eight, 2 are Park Ranger trainee positions. At this time 3 TERM employees (2 are Local Hire) are also employed at the Park. Recruitment of 3 additional Permanent positions (Park Ranger -DARE, Program Assistant (Maintenance), and Utility Systems Repairer-Operator) is expected to occur during the 1999 fiscal year. Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P expects to hire approximately 33 temporary employees to work during the May - September season. WRST also brings in from 10-35 (dependent upon project needs) volunteers to assist the various divisions in accomplishing a short season work load each year.

What is the Local Hire Program?

The Alaska National Interest Lands Act (ANILCA), Public Law-96-487, enacted on December 2, 1980, provided for the establishment of an Alaska local hire program. The program was written with the intent of recognizing the quality of human resources available in Alaska. This program is designed to take advantage of the wide variety of local skills and knowledge.

Can I be considered for one of these positions?

Any person, who by reason of having lived or worked in or near the specific National Park area, has special knowledge or expertise concerning the natural or cultural resources of the National Park area, can be considered. The applicant must be able to demonstrate the possession of the knowledge or expertise as a result of having lived in or near the National Park area. After eligibility is established the best qualified applicant will be appointed to the position.

Where are Local Hire Announcements for Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P advertised?

The Park issues recruitment bulletins which are available

through the Alaska Employment Service, Mi. 186.5 Glenn Highway, P.O. Box 109, Glennallen, AK 99588 (907) 822-3550; at WRST Headquarters, Mi 105.5, Old Richardson Hwy., Copper Center (907) 822 5234; Chitina Ranger Station (when open) in Chitina, AK and the Nabesna Ranger Station, in Slana, AK. Vacancy announcements are generally broadcast for the first week on the local radio station (KCAM-790 am) and posted on the local U.S. Post Office bulletin boards, as well as the McCarthy mail shack.

Want More Information?


If you have any questions or want to just talk about employment with the National Park Service, feel free to call Michelle Masters at 822-7224. She will be happy to assist you.

Park Webpage Has Been Updated!

After extensive work, the official Wrangell - St. Elias National Park and Preserve homepage has been updated. Much more extensive than in the past, the webpage includes items such as specific recreational opportunities, links to area businesses and attractions, subsistence and ATV permitting information, employment vacancy announcements, and a great deal of historical and other informative information. Soon, we will have links to current planning projects so that you can have your voice heard without leaving your home. Come see us at:

<http://www.nps.gov/wrst>.


Give us your views on what you think!



The National Park Service

Wrangell - St. Elias

National Park and Preserve



A message from the Superintendent

Check out the details on the Electronic Field Trip to Wrangell-St. Elias, scheduled for broadcast on May 5 and 6, 1999.

Park Regulations	Safety Information	Districts	Weather Information	Area Information
Camping	Pack Trips	Float Trips	Mountain Biking	Mountain Biking
Fishing Regulations	Hunting Regulations	Subsistence Permits	ATV Permits	Alaska Natural History Assoc.
Park History	Kenecott	Natural Resources	Cultural Resources	World Heritage
Park Planning & Press Releases	Park Telephone #s	Employment	NPS Home	More Parks!

Leave No Trace Tips

April Showers brings May flowers so what do July showers bring? How about fun and adventure for seven young ladies who didn't let a little precipitation get them down. In the summer of 1998, Park Rangers Jessi Roullier and Ruth Ann Warden led a group of Copper Basin kids on the 2nd Annual Leave No Trace camping trip. This trip is designed to show young people the importance of keeping it clean while out in the wild. Instruction in Leave No Trace (LNT) focuses on these principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces
- Pack It In, Pack It Out
- Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Use and Impact from Fires
- Respect Private Land and Subsistence Users

LNT Trainer Ruth Ann Warden is planning to expand the program to include other age groups this summer. If you are interested in learning more about this program or other LNT activities call 822-7258 or listen for announcements on local radio stations in June.

What's Going on at the Nabesna Mine?

Environmental geochemical investigations were carried out between 1994 and 1997 at Nabesna Mine by Robert Eppinger and Paul Briggs of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and Danny Rosenkrans, geologist for Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P. The Nabesna Mine is located west of the Nabesna River approximately 2 miles beyond the state maintained road. The

Nabesna Mining Corporation formed in 1929 and conducted mining and exploration until 1940. The mill and associated buildings are located on private lands. A thin veneer of fine, pyrite-rich and iron-oxide-rich mill tailings is present over a several-thousand-square-meter area below the mill on public lands. Water that comes in contact with the tailings becomes very acidic and carries high metal levels.



The purpose of the study was to identify environmental geochemical hazards and to determine baseline levels for selected elements. Water, sediment, rock and tailings samples were collected and analyzed. This was a cooperative effort between the USGS and the National Park Service (NPS) to address land-management concerns in response to an EPA initiated a site investigation (SI) conducted in 1995. That SI was a preliminary investigation and did not include extensive or complete site characterization or determine the extent of metal dispersion in surface waters downstream from the mill site.

Currently the USGS and NPS are finalizing 2 reports. These include "Environmental Geochemical Studies of Select Mineral Deposits within Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P" an interpretive report and "Geochemical Data for Environmental Studies of Mineral Deposits at Nabesna, Kennecott, Orange Hill, Bond Creek, Bremner, and Gold Hill, Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P. Both reports will be published by the USGS this year.

The NPS plans develop mitigation alternatives that address the ecological and environmental threats posed by the mill tailings. We will contract with an environmental firm to prepare an Engineering and Economic Cost Analysis (EECA) that evaluates the cost and benefits of the mitigation alternatives. Within the next 12

months the draft EECA will be made available for public comment. After receiving public comment and finalizing the EECA, the NPS will implement the preferred mitigation alternative. We anticipate commencing onsite activities sometime in 2000.

Chitina, Gateway to Wrangell

Historically, Chitina has been recognized as the railroad hub to the riches of the Wrangell Mountains and to points, north. This ideal location is still a primary stopping place for travelers heading out along the McCarthy Road. As a result the state department of transportation (DOT) constructed a wonderful rest stop on the site of the old Copper River & Northwestern Railway station. Following construction, the people of Chitina, represented by Art Koeninger, have worked with representatives from Alaska State Parks and WRST to develop a wayside exhibit for which the town can be proud. The shelter, which represents the railroad station, has been patiently awaiting completion of information panels since last summer. These exhibit panels, which are scheduled for completion this spring are intended to provide visitors with information about the town and surrounding area, the McCarthy Road and area history. It is hoped that visitors will stop, enjoy, and learn about this beautiful spot and the history of what was once considered, "the hub to interior Alaska." Hopefully, the exhibits will help prepare the public for a memorable journey as they proceed into the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

The small parking lot at the site is really not intended for overnight parking but rather for a brief stop while exploring the adjacent sites. Visitor will be encouraged to use area campgrounds and other commercial accommodations and to recognize and respect the rights of the numerous landowners along the way.

Wanna Take a Hike? Try Dixie Pass

MAPS: USGS Quadrangle Maps - Valdez (C-1), McCarthy (C-8)
1:63,360: Valdez, McCarthy
1:250,000

DISTANCE: Approximately 24 miles round trip to Dixie Pass from Kotsina Rd.

TIME: 3-4 days for Dixie Pass

ACCESS: Access to the Dixie Pass trailhead is via the Nugget Creek/Kotsina Road. At the Nugget Creek trailhead follow the Kotsina Road straight ahead for 1.3 miles. The trailhead to the Dixie Pass is not clearly marked but there is a small clearing on the left side of the road with the trail beginning on the right side.

ROUTE: For the first 3 miles a trail follows a wooded bench area before dropping down to Strelna Creek. After reaching Strelna Creek, the hiker should stay on the west side of the creek for approximately 4 miles until reaching the confluence of Strelna Creek and the drainage leading to Dixie Pass. The eastern most drainage of the confluence leads to Dixie Pass. Here, near the confluence, is where the Strelna Creek is usually crossed. During high runoff the hiker may elect to continue on the west side of the Strelna Creek to a location where crossing is easier. The next section of trail becomes dense with alder and willow necessitating frequent creek crossings. The drainage will also be crossed many times in order to avoid getting "cliffed out" along the opposite side. Continue along this drainage until the next major confluence, approx. 2 miles, taking care to follow the Dixie Pass drainage to the north. The next stretch of trail crosses to the eastern side of Dixie Pass drainage for approx. 1 mile. At this point the drainage cuts through a narrow canyon that is walled in by cliffs on both sides (see map). The creek can be waded here during periods of low runoff. Caution: During high water it is unsafe to

travel by foot along this section. Hikers may find it safer to climb higher, along the eastern ridge, dropping back down toward the creek bed as it broadens out again. From this point it is approx. 2 more miles up to Dixie Pass along a game trail that switchbacks and traverses the westerly facing slope to the pass. Dixie Pass offers ridge line day hikes with scenic high country views. Return route is via the same trail used for access.

CAMPS: Good campsites are found along Strelna Creek and the Dixie Pass drainage on sand/gravel bars. The saddle of Dixie Pass has room for 3 or 4 tents. However, be

route. Precautions should be taken to avoid encounters with bears. Packing out all excess food and garbage will prevent habituation of wildlife. Stream crossings may present difficulties and dangers due to water volume, clarity and velocity that varies drastically according to the season, time of day and upstream weather conditions. Water temperatures of most creeks are just above freezing, even in mid-summer. A firm understanding of glacial creeks and river crossing experience is essential. The hiker should be prepared for all types of weather conditions, including rain and snow in the higher elevations. Summertime brings snow to the saddle of Dixie Pass, use extreme caution when crossing snow fields as they may conceal drainage systems underneath. This is a remote area, and rescue or medical evacuation possibilities are limited and may take several days.

TERRAIN / VEGETATION: The terrain and vegetation is exceptionally varied. Lowland willow and alder covers the creek beds. This gives way to level moss covered benches with cottonwood, paper birch, aspen and both black and white spruce. Finally, steep hillsides or arctic tundra including studded willow, lichens, moss and a variety of brightly colored wild flowers.



advised that Dixie Pass is a through-way for bear and other wildlife thus camping is not advised. Hikers may want to camp and day hike from confluence 1 mile below walled in canyon- always secure possessions and food appropriately. Water is easily accessible for most of the trip except for the last mile or so up to the Pass. At Dixie Pass water can be collected from snow field runoff (snowpack dependent).

POTENTIAL HAZARDS: Bears may be present anywhere along this

SUMMARY: Dixie Pass Trail is one of the only true backcountry hikes in the park that can be accessed by road without having to make costly fly-in arrangements. Dixie Pass is an obvious and natural corridor for wildlife. The hiker may find and lose the game trails many times before the trip is completed. Creeks must also be crossed several times. As long as the map route is followed the pass will be easy to find.



Donna Tollman to be Nominated as Second Recipient of the Andy Taylor Award For Community Service

The staff at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park wish to nominate Donna Tollman, former

Executive Director of the Copper Valley Economic Development Council, for the Wrangell-St. Elias Andy Taylor Community Service Award. Donna has been a friend to the Park for many years and has worked cooperatively with park staff on a number of projects that have benefited both the community and the Park. She recruited a number of park employees to serve as board members for the Economic Development Council which helped to facilitate community acceptance of park staff when there were tensions between the park and community members. Additionally, she was always welcoming new Park

employees and did her best to make them feel at home.

Some of the most important assistance Donna provided was in the redesign of the Park Visitor Center. Originally, the National Park Service had planned one large building for the Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center. General public reaction to such a structure was tepid. There were concerns that the size and scale of the building were incompatible with the rural character of the area. Donna was influential in prompting the NPS to reconsider this structure. When the NPS began re-evaluating the Visitor Center, Donna was able to eloquently articulate the preference for a complex of smaller buildings. This complex of buildings reflects the rural

architecture of the area and provides a more comprehensive visitor experience of the site. Additionally, it provides a substantial cost savings in the construction and operation of the facility. Donna's participation in this re-evaluation was instrumental in the general acceptance of the new design by the agency and the community.

Donna's friends and colleagues among the park staff miss her leadership at the Economic Development Council and are saddened by her trials with ALS. We hope that this award in some small way conveys our appreciation and honors all her efforts in service to her community. We know that Wrangell-St. Elias has benefited greatly from her friendship.

Staff Profile

With the introduction of the Wrangell Wire we felt it important to introduce the professionals that make up the park staff. This inaugural newsletter profiles one of the local hire staff Wrangell-St. Elias's Computer Specialist:

Robert L. "Bob" Jones

Born: Fairchild AFB
Spokane, WA, 1961

Spouse: Mona

Children: Spencer,
Sara
Wade

Home: Kenny Lake

Alaska since: Bob & Kids 1996
Mona 1964

Education: Manufacturing
Engineer

Bob joined the Wrangell staff in July of 1997 as a "Local Hire", Computer specialist and prior to joining Wrangell team Bob worked

as a chef in a local restaurant. Bob and, Mona came to the Copper Basin to raise their children in 1996, after a 15-year career in the private sector, living in Seattle, Dallas and Phoenix. With a background in engineering, business and electronics Bob was able to bring a wealth of experience to the staff at Wrangell.

As a computer specialist in the park service, Bob's primary job is to provide the computer, software and technological infrastructure support to the park staff in the fulfillment of the parks' mission. What that means is that Bob is our staff computer nerd. Bob researches today's technology and makes recommendations for planning of the electronic needs at the park. He feels that a critical reason to be at the park is to anticipate the technical needs of the staff 3 to 5 years before they are critical to the park mission. Bob guides the staff on how to use the technology and programs to better do their jobs. In addition he does all of the repairs, upgrade and programming of the park computers. Bob has also used his talent and experience to support two other Alaska region parks, has

responsibilities for the parks' property, support the resource management division with AutoCAD and GIS work, as well as, most of the parks' desktop publishing. Bob is one of the busiest members of the Wrangell Staff.

As a permanent resident of the Copper Basin, Bob invests many hours to community interest and issues serving in the past on the CRSD Board of Education, Kenny Lake Volunteer Fire Department, USA Hockey "Mites" Coaching and CRSD Technology Committee.





THE WRANGELL WIRE

**A NEWSLETTER BY THE STAFF OF
WRANGELL ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE COPPER RIVER BASIN**



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COMMENTS?

If you have any comments about the Wrangell Wire, please drop us a note or give us a call. We value your opinions and suggestions. Please write to: Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, P.O. Box 439, Copper Center, Alaska 99573 or give us a call at 907/822-5234.



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